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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The rare trumpeter swan is still continuing to increase annually and now has an estimated population of at least 283 birds in the United States, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior, announced today.

This estimate was obtained from a joint count made in August by personnel of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. The estimate for 1943 was 221.

These birds, largest migratory waterfowl in North America, which were once thought extinct, are concentrated on a group of lakes and reservoirs centered around the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Montana and in the Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

Trumpeter swan populations since annual counts have been made are as follows: 73 in 1935; 114 in 1936; 168 in 1937; 148 in 1938; 199 in 1939; 185 in 1940; 211 in 1941; 199 in 1942; and 221 in 1943.

A total of 210 adults and 73 cygnets made up this year's count. A breakdown indicates that there were 164 trumpeters on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge (106 adults and 58 cygnets), 59 on Yellowstone Park (48 adults and 11 cygnets), 55 on surrounding lands (53 adults and 3 cygnets), and four on the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming. The latter figure represents an unmated adult and a mated pair which nested successfully for the first time this year, producing a single cygnet. These adult birds were transferred from the Red Rock Lakes Refuge in 1939.

The count of the birds this season on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge indicates an increase of more than 200 percent in the number of cygnets produced this year over last. Dr. Ward H. Sharp, refuge manager, recently counted 58 cygnets on the refuge while only 25 young birds were found a year ago.

Naturalists in Yellowstone Park reported an increase in numbers with 11 cygnets and 48 adults within the Park. An additional 56 trumpeter swan were noted by Dr. Sharp on other lakes and reservoirs in Montana and Idaho within 100 miles of the refuge area.

Service officials are encouraged by the fact that birds in small numbers were found on a larger number of areas than during previous counts. A brood of three cygnets was raised successfully on a nearby slough area. These were the only cygnets known to have been produced this year outside of Federally-protected areas. Heavy rains and abnormally high water on nearby lakes and

reservoirs are believed responsible for the loss of nests on at least three other areas.

The trumpeter swan, once an abundant bird, faced extinction in the United States in the early part of the century. The number of trumpeters had fallen so low by 1907 that many people believed the bird was extinct. Then a small flock was discovered in the Red Rock Lakes and the Yellowstone Park region. While these birds have been given protection within the Park for many years, it was not until 1935 that the Red Rock Lakes Refuge was established by the Fish and Wildlife Service, primarily for the protection and perpetuation of these huge birds.

The greater success in the production of young birds this year is attributed by Dr. Gabrielson to improved technique for winter care of the swans. It was found that the adults survived the winter, apparently in more vigorous condition as a result of the extensive use of an all-grain diet. Water levels are maintained at a nearly constant level and small grass mounds in the two lakes on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge provide ideal nesting sites. Most of the non-breeding birds apparently remain on the lakes in Yellowstone Park in summer while the majority of the breeding birds use the refuge grounds. A considerable share of the population during the winter frequents warm springs located on the Red Rock Lakes area.

Service officials are encouraged by the increase of these birds during the past season. They believe that with continuation of studies on safeguarding the cygnets through the first year, the perpetuation of this noble bird may be assured.